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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to articulate the relative meanings and values of various forms of subject matter. The paper first constructs a synthesizing definition of subject matter. All subject matter is conceptual in nature and is composed of words or statements concerning objects and events of the world which are to be taught and learned. The paper then discusses the three major subject matter types or approaches and their value and meaning: the life skills and experiential curriculum approach characterized by practicality, utility, and function; the romantic curriculum approach which emphasizes involvement, creativity, and expression; and the structuralist curriculum approach which emphasizes lawfulness, order, precision, and predictability. The three types of meaning--extrinsic, intrinsic, and formal--are then applied to six fields of human activity--the individual person, groups of persons, things, groups of things, concepts, and words. From this application emerge 18 subject matter sub-types the meaning and value of which are discussed. For example, the application of extrinsic meaning to individual persons shows persons as psychologically functioning persons. This meaning is basic to personality functioning studies that emphasize the interaction of persons with their environment. Another example is the application of extrinsic meaning to things showing things as utilities. This gives economic meaning which is basic to courses of study that emphasize consumer, vocational, and business practice. (RM)

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A VALUE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT FORMS OF SUBJECT MATTER

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There is a current tendency in the curriculum field to conceptualize subject matter as a material or real entity. Subject matter is conceived as facts, as material to be taught and learned. Subject matter is viewed as "out there" as part of the school environment. The curriculum subjects are interpreted as empirical entities that conform to causal physical and social laws. This approach to subject matter may be termed the naturalistic or objectivistic orientation to subject matter.

This orientation to the school subjects emphasizes the factual, real aspects of the school studies. The objective point of view, however, has some limitations. The "naturalistic attitude" does not emphasize the meaning, the value, the subjectivity of subject matter. Subject matter, from the point of view of the naturalistic attitude, takes on a mundane quality -- a matter-of-factness. There is a tendency in this attitude to objectify and factualize content rather than to view the studies in terms of their significance and value.

There is an alternative way of viewing the studies that emphasizes the human or subjective qualities of various subjects. This method of subject matter investigation views subjects in terms of their meaning structure, in terms of their relation to human concerns and human values. In this orientation, the studies are understood in terms of their relation to human consciousness. This way of viewing subject matter may be termed the subjective method of subject matter interpretation. This focus tends to consider the human values and meanings implicit in subject matter. It tends to be concerned with the philosophical or value perspectives implicit in a subject matter domain.

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The failure to expose the meanings and values of our school studies can produce a toredom and meaninglessness in relation to subject matter, teaching and learning. Cynicism, skepticism, carelessness and lack of commitment in relation to subject matter may be the result of the failure to articulate the meaningfulness and significance of the various studies. The current sense of anomie, meaninglessness and unrelatedness that characterizes attitudes toward subject matter may be a result of our failure to determine the "subjective" characteristics of subject matter.

Relative Value of Subject Matter

The purpose of this paper is to articulate clearly the relative meanings, values and connotations of various historically significant forms of subject matter. The problem of this paper is to present a ground, a justification, a sense of purpose or value of the various forms and types of subject matter. The central questions that are addressed in this paper are, "What are the relative values and meanings of such important subject matter orientations (types) as practical and vocational studies, studies of underlying principles and key concepts, experientially organized studies, romantic humanistic studies?"

There has been a continuing effort to ground, justify and provide the meaning and value of various forms of subject matter. The philosophical writings of Bruner, Dewey, Bobbitt and Harris were attempts to articulate the basic meanings and significance of different types of subject matter. American curriculum theory (philosophy) has been, from the turn of the century to the present, an effort to provide the ground and meaning of the various forms of studies. These philosophical efforts have been at their core a subjective analysis of subject matter forms. The quest has been for an articulation of subject matter based on its fundamental significance and value. This form of curriculum investigation may of course be contrasted with more objective, naturalistic forms of curriculum research that emphasize fact analysis, cause and effect investigations

and comparative investigations.

Subjective or meaning analysis of curriculum studies then is not new. There has been a long and persistent effort to ground and justify the course of study. Philosophical investigation of subject matter has been handicapped however by a reliance on the methods of systems philosophy. Each of the great subject matter theorists have developed a philosophical system that attempts to justify and ground a particular subject matter orientation. Reliance on this form of philosophical study has resulted in the proliferation of a variety of subject matter theories. Each theory is articulated as an independent system -- independent and unrelated to every other theory. So that today there are theories which advocate structured learning, behavioral learning, experiential learning, affective learning, etc. in the classroom.

Current research in the study of subjectivity provides an alternative to this relativizing tendency in curriculum theory. Current developments in phenomenology, value theory and logic provide an alternative approach to systems philosophy. A synthesizing philosophy of subject matter is needed to provide a unity among the various disparate subject matter orientations. It would then be possible to have a unified definition of subject matter rather than a conflicting set of subject matter theories. Philip Phenix made a very important attempt at developing a unified theory of subject matter based on a philosophy of meaning. Since Philip Phenix published his work (1964), there have been advances made in the scholarship related to the nature of meaning. It is now possible to define meaning more formally and with greater precision. It is now possible to link all the disparate "philosophies" of the curriculum with one philosophy -- a philosophy based on the logical structure of meaning.

A Synthesizing Definition of Meaning

Meaning may be defined formally. To arrive at a definition of meaning it is appropriate to go to the science of logic. From the perspective of logic

meaning is defined as a concept. There are two important characteristics of the idea concept: (1) concepts are composed of sets of predicates -- that is, words or statements and (2) predicates have as their referents, objects and events of the world. The set of predicates is termed intension of the concept. The referents are termed extension of the concept (Hartman, p. 49). A concept then may be thought of as having a "double aperture". It has a set of words or symbols which give its definition and it has reference to a set of items, concrete or abstract (Hartman, p. 31). The two elements of concept are interrelated. A change in the set of predicates or definition of the concept effects a change in the referents of the concepts. As the definition changes so do the referents.

As Philip Phenix argued almost 20 years ago, the proper goal of the curriculum or subject matter is to promote meaning. At its root, subject matter is meaning offered for curriculum design, teaching and learning. By defining meaning generically it is possible to understand subject matter generically. All subject matter, whatever its philosophical orientation has some form of meaning in common. All of the varying types of philosophies of subject matter have in common that they are conceptual in nature and have intensional predicates and extensional referents which are offered for teaching and learning.

Types of Meaning

There are three different types of meaning from which are derived the great forms of subject matter - experiential, life skills; structure of the disciplines; and romantic, humanist. The three different types of meaning are derived from three types of concepts. The concepts are different in that they contain different intensions or predicates.

Abstract concepts contain expositional or classificatory intensions. Expositional intensions have as their referents or extension, the world of classes and functional characteristics. The type of meaning derived from abstract

concepts may be termed practical or extrinsic meaning. Extrinsic meaning is the meaning of everyday living. It is the meaning that results in everyday functions and practices. Practical meaning emerges when things of the world are viewed as having class properties. Extrinsic meaning is the model of utilitarian pragmatic living (Hartman, p. 113).

Singular concepts contain depictional (metaphorical) intensions. Depictional intensions have as their referent or extension unique things of the world. The type of meaning derived from singular concepts is intrinsic meaning and involvement. Intrinsic meanings are associated with states of immediate experience, expression, involvement, joy, commitment, feeling, affect. It is the meaning of poets, artists, creative scientists. It is the meaning that results in involvement with the world (Hartman, p. 113).

Formal or definitional concepts have as their referents or extension the world of structured objects and events. The type of meaning derived from formal concepts may be termed systematic or formal meaning. Formal meaning is the meaning of system and relations. It is objective and detached meaning. The world is viewed in its structured interrelationships. Formal meaning is associated with states of order, precision, lawfulness. It is the meaning of formal science and technology. The world is viewed as structured and lawful (Hartman, p. 112).

A Hierarchy of Meaning and Value

Depictional, expositional and definitional intensions each define a specific kind of concept and each concept defines a specific kind of meaning and value. These intensions constitute a hierarchy of richness and meaning. Depictional intensions are the richest in qualities. The predicates of these intensions are words of infinite meaning. They are metaphors (Hartman, p. 113). "Metaphorical language therefore is a nondenumerable infinity, a continuum" (Hartman, p. 113). Therefore, the singular concept with depictional intensions

contain the greatest connotation, meaning or value. Expositional intensions contain predicates that are denumerable -- they may be abstracted one by one. These intensions have in practice, a limited number of qualities (Hartman, p. 113). The abstract concept with expositional intensions have less of a connotation, meaning or value. Definitional intensions contain finite sets of predicates (Hartman, p. 112). This kind of intension is limited to a minimum of qualities -- as in a formal definition where only two qualities are given. The formal concept with definitional intensions has less qualities and therefore less of a connotation, meaning or value.

Each of the particular logical forms of meaning is the basis of a major subject matter type. The experiential and life skills subject matter is dependent on the logic of class relations and description. Romantic subject matter is dependent on the logic of the metaphor. Structuralist subject matter is dependent on the logic of formal definition.

Major Subject Matter Types and Their Meaning and Value

Life Skills and Experiential Curriculum Approach

Extrinsic meaning is basic to the life functioning or life skills orientation of the curriculum. Life skills or life functioning curriculum theory emphasized practical activities and skills -- everyday functioning and utilitarian living. Herbert Spencer was a major proponent of this curriculum theory. Spencer's approach is a utilitarian functional approach to what should be taught. It emphasizes functional living or activities of the everyday life world. The subject matter to be learned is essentially utilitarian attributes of the world. In this content approach things and events are interpreted as to their possession of class characteristics -- their functionality. "Complete living" for Spencer is everyday functioning or activities. Spencer stated in his famous chapter, "What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?"

> How to live? -- that is the essential question for us. . . . --how to use all our faculties to the greatest advantage of ourselves and

> others -- how to live completely? . . . . Our first step must obviously be to classify in order of their importance, the leading kinds of activity which constitute human life. (1875, pp. 30-32)

Extrinsic meaning is also basic to the experiential curriculum developed by John Dewey. The experiential curriculum stresses a purposeful, goal-oriented problem approach. The subject matter to be learned in the experiential curriculum is practical doing or action. Experiencing for Dewey is practical action that is determined by consequences. Experience is a practice or a doing that takes place with a cause and effect or time dimension. Dewey has given many definitions of experiences to be taught by teachers and learned by students. Perhaps the clearest definition is, "When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences" (1916, p. 134). Courses of study that emphasize personal, social, intellectual or language problem-solving are derivative of this pragmatic curriculum orientation. This approach will not be detailed in this paper.

Romantic Curriculum Approach

Intrinsic meaning is basic to the Romantic Curriculum Approach. The Romantic curriculum theory emphasizes intrinsic states such as expression, sensing, desiring, joy, immediate experience, involvement, creativity. Romantic curriculum is a derivative of the great Romantic theories of Rousseau. Modern Romantics such as Mario Fantini and A.S. Neill take seriously Rousseau's dictum that "Perception and feeling are his (man's) first state, . . . willing and refusing, desiring and fearing: These are the first and, almost the only, operations of his soul" (Rousseau, 1974, p. 154).

The modern Romantics have taken this thesis and argued that content should be focused on intrinsic meaning -- affect, feeling, commitment, expression, sensing, involvement and immediate experience. Courses of study and programs that stress affective learning, immediate experiential and awareness states and perceptual skills are derivative of this curriculum approach.

Structuralist Curriculum Approach

Formal or systematic meaning is basic to the structuralist curriculum approach. Structuralist curriculum theory emphasizes underlying principles and relationships of phenomena. It emphasizes lawfulness, order, precision, predictability, structure of the world. Jerome Bruner has been a modern proponent of the structuralist curriculum orientation. Bruner defines subject matter as structure. "Grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully. To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related" (1963, p. 7).

The modern structuralists have taken the notion of relationship and argued that subjects should be focused on formal or systematic meaning. The subject matter should be focused on lawful relations, principles, axioms, laws, theories, models, etc. Courses of study and programs derived from this approach stress formal learning -- the learning of structured and ordered relationships. The emphasis is on the learning and teaching of structured relationships in language, logic and mathematics and technology.

Subject Matter Sub-Types and Their Meaning and Value

The application of the three types of meaning -- extrinsic, intrinsic, and formal to various fields of human activity produce sub-types of meaning. We will confine ourselves to six fields of human activity -- the individual person, groups of persons, things, groups of things, concepts and words. The subject matter sub-types are then derived from the sub-types of meaning. A pattern of eighteen subject matter sub-types evolve. (See figure 2.)

Personality Functioning Studies

The application of extrinsic meaning to individual persons shows persons as functions -- as psychologically functioning persons. This meaning is basic to courses that emphasize the functioning (interaction) of persons with their environment. For example, in behavior modification programs derived from

Skinnerian theory behavioral changes are the content of the curriculum to be taught by teachers. In the words of Beth Sulzer and Roy Mayer, the authors of a recent book in behavior modification practices, "The first step in a program of behavior change is to specify goals, or target or terminal behaviors by describing exactly what the individual is expected to be able to do at the end of the program" (Sulzer and Mayer, 1972, p. 4). In this approach derived from Skinnerian psychological theory, terminal behaviors are the objectives or goals of the program -- that which is to be taught and learned.

In curriculum programs derived from psychological need theory, the studies or the content of the curriculum are for example, adolescent or child needs. In the book, Exploring the Curriculum by H. H. Giles et al, some of the needs identified as part of the curriculum are, establishing personal relationships, establishing independence, understanding human behavior, establishing self and society.

There are many other curriculum programs that are derived from other psychological theories. For example, curriculum programs that emphasize affective or emotive content to be learned and programs that emphasize other personality functions as subject matter to be taught.

Social Functioning Studies

The application of extrinsic meaning to groups of persons shows these groups as classes of functions. This type of meaning shows persons as functioning in social roles. This meaning is basic to social utility or activity analysis type of subject matter. This form of curriculum was developed by Bobbitt in his classic work, The Curriculum in 1918. This approach emphasizes student learning to fulfill adult roles. In his book, The Curriculum, Bobbitt develops the social utility approach to the curriculum that focuses on training students to function in their social roles. The curriculum " . . . is that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life, and to be in all respects

what adults should be" (p. 42).

Economic Practice Studies

The application of extrinsic meaning to things shows things as utilities -- as goods and services. This gives economic meaning. This meaning is basic to courses of study that emphasize consumer, vocational and business practice.

Environmental or Ecological Practice Studies

Extrinsic meaning applied to groups of things shows things as classes of functions. This type of meaning is basic to ecology courses and units in which ecological environmental practice or functioning is emphasized.

Applied Knowledge Studies

Extrinsic meaning applied to concepts shows concepts as functions. In this orientation concepts or knowledge are viewed as useful or utilitarian. Concepts are viewed as having specific reference to objects and events. This meaning produces the subject matter orientation of utilitarian knowledge. This includes all knowledge that is viewed as useful. B. O. Smith has currently been one of the chief advocates of this type of course of study. He states, "Curriculum workers and teachers intend the knowledge in the curriculum to be useful to students" (Orlosky and Smith, 1978, p. 223). All courses of study that emphasize the use of knowledge in the everyday world are derived from this type of meaning.

Semantic and Linguistic Practice Studies

Extrinsic meaning applied to words shows words as functions. This type of meaning is basic to language programs that emphasize language use or practice. The course of study requires students to learn words and sentences to be used in the practical world of social relations.

Ethical and Self-Concept Development Studies

From the perspective of intrinsic meaning, individual persons are viewed as unique individuals, fulfilling or failing to fulfill their own chosen self-concept. Persons are viewed as caring and involved with the self and others.

Persons are recognized as having dignity, integrity, authenticity and worth. This type of meaning is basic to programs and studies that emphasize self-concept development, caring for others, personal growth and development and self-realization. Alice Miel summed up this curriculum orientation in an article entitled, "Let Us Develop Children Who Care About Themselves and Others".

> The items I have put first in planning a better curriculum at the elementary level is fostering in each child a healthy concept of self. By this I mean that the child feels that he has the worth, dignity, the basic rights of any human being. By this I mean, also, that he realizes the extent to which he depends on others and they on him for that very humanness -- how inextricably interwoven are the self and the other.(Miel, 1965, p. 406)

Social Reconstruction Studies

Intrinsic meaning applied to groups of persons shows groups as unique and shows groups in their involvement and participation with group goals and institutions. This type of meaning is basic to courses of study that emphasize social reconstruction and social improvement. This social reconstructionist orientation study has today been revived and advocated by R. Freeman Butts, the student of the originator of this curriculum approach, George Counts. Butts and his followers have emphasized what he calls a "liberal civic curriculum". In Butts own words, . . . "A good place to start would be to accelerate efforts to focus the liberal civic curriculum of the schools and colleges upon the values, knowledge, and skills of participation required of citizens in the promotion of their constitutional rights and civil liberties" (Butts, 1976, p. 12). These curriculum approaches focus on the goal of citizenship participation and involvement.

Esthetic Appreciation and Expression Studies

Things may be experienced intrinsically, in a creative expressive and involved way. This type of meaning produces the subject matter orientation of Esthetics and the Arts. This content orientation includes the creation, appreciation and expression of artistic works. The recent curriculum project entitled Cemrel Esthetic Education Program has adopted this orientation. Their program goals emphasize esthetic creativity, intrinsic esthetic values, the esthetic

object or event, experience and involvement with esthetic objects (Madeja, 1976).

Appreciation and Expression of Cultural Values Studies

Intrinsic meaning applied to groups of things shows things as unique groups of configurations. In this way, groups of things are viewed as unique cultures or configurations. This meaning is basic to classical humanities type of subject matter. In this type of subject matter, unique cultural forms or ideals are taught and learned. William T. Harris' classical curriculum orientation is an expression of this type of content. According to Harris, the course of study is the pursuit of the cultural ideals of a people. Harris states that the purpose of the course of study is "to master the wisdom of the race" (Harris, 1973, p. 307). He identifies literature as the most important study. "The poets of a people first paint the ideal which makes civilization possible. Literature furnishes the most essential branch of education -- so far as its function is to help the child into civilization" (Harris, 1973, p. 307).

Creative Thinking Studies

Intrinsic meaning applied to concepts shows involvement with concepts. Concepts are viewed as unique. Wonder, curiosity, imagination, creative thinking are characteristic of this form of meaning. This type of meaning is basic to courses in creative thinking and courses that are designed to promote the development of wonder and imagination.

Poetic and Literary Appreciation and Expression Studies

Intrinsic meaning applied to words shows words as unique or as metaphors. This meaning is basic to studies of poetry and literature. This approach to curriculum emphasizes the teaching and learning of metaphorical relationships and the uniqueness of words. This type of study focuses on the appreciation of poetry and literature.

Health Control and Regulation Studies

Formal meaning applied to individual persons shows the individual as an interrelated system. The content focus derived from this type of meaning is

physiological health. These programs emphasize the proper interrelationship of body processes and interactions. The course of study includes units in the controlling and ordering of body operations. Programs such as medical training, physical fitness are examples of this approach.

Legal Conformity and Legal System Studies

Formal meaning applied to groups of persons produces a formal system of interpersonal relations -- the law of persons and institutions. The subject matter orientation here is legal studies -- with programs that emphasize the adherence and conformance to the law. Some of the current programs in law related studies have emphasized this approach. These courses have been stressing law-related responsibility.

Technological Operations Studies

Formal meaning applied to individual things presents each thing as in interrelated system -- as a machine. This type of meaning produces the subject matter orientation of technical and engineering studies. Technical and mechanical studies have been developed in many high schools in different parts of the country. For example, C. M. Woodward advocated this type of curriculum in the 1870's and 1880's. He founded the Manual Training High School of Washington University of 1879 (Woodward, 1889, pp. 73-91). Woodward's curriculum approach focused on manual training, metal and woodworking, drawing and mechanics. The emphasis was on the development of mechanical aptitude and ability. This approach originated by Woodward later became known as Industrial Arts.

Industrial Technology and Civil Engineering

Formal meaning applied to groups of things produces the fields of industrial technology and civil engineering. This type of meaning produces the content areas of civil engineering and industrial engineering.

Logical and Mathematical Operations Studies

From the perspective of formal meaning concepts are viewed as part of a logical system and following logical and mathematical rules. This type of

meaning is basic to courses that emphasize logical thinking skills, mathematical reasoning processes and critical thinking. This type of course focuses on the learning of logical operations. B.O. Smith advocated a sub-type of this curriculum approach -- logical thinking. He argued that students' thinking processes should be in conformity with certain logical rules or operations. The focus of teaching ought to be such logical operations as description, definition, analysis and logical appraisal or evaluation. Smith suggested that thinking skills ought to include, "How to distinguish between logical validity and empirical truth, how to tell when an argument is valid and when a proposition is true . . . . how to identify hypotheses" (1965, p. 351).

The subject matter to be learned in this course of study are logical rules or logical criteria that order, control and guide individuals' reasoning. The new math and many types of thinking skill programs are derivative of this orientation.

Grammar

From the perspective of formal meaning words are viewed as a formal system following grammatical rules. This type of meaning is basic to courses that focus on constructing words and sentences in conformity to grammatical rules. This content orientation focuses on ordering words and sentences to conform with grammatical structures and rules.

Relative Values of Types of Subject Matter

The analysis of subject matter that has just been presented exposes a typology of relative subject matter values. The philosophy, meaning or value of each of the historically significant forms of subject matter were precisely defined.

Life skills and experientially organized subjects have as their dominant value practicality and utility. They are based on analytic concepts and therefore have a denumerably infinite connotation. However, these types of courses have less intrinsic or involvement value than do courses of the romantic or

humanistic type such as poetry or esthetics. Romantic or humanistic type courses have the greatest involvement and richness. They are based on metaphorical thinking. However, they have less practicality and also less precision and structure. Structuralist studies based on formal or definitional thinking provide the greatest precision, order and definition but have less practicality and utility. They also have less intrinsic richness and involvement.

This establishes a hierarchy in the typology of subject matter with some forms of subject matter having greater richness and connotation. Other forms of subject matter have greater utility and still other forms of subject matter provide more order and systematization.

Conclusion

A synthesizing definition of meaning developed from the disciplines of phenomenology and logic was presented. This definition was applied to construct a synthesizing definition of subject matter. Three types of meaning were defined. Three major philosophies of the curriculum -- life skills and experientialism, romanticism, and structuralism -- were defined in relation to the three types of meaning. Further, a set of sub-types of meaning were developed from which were derived a set of sub-types of subject matter.

The three major types of meaning were defined as a hierarchy of meaning. From this hierarchy was derived a hierarchy of subject matter values that exposes the relative values of different forms of subject matter.

The significance of this paper is that it presents a rationally and logically derived statement of the relative values of different curriculum forms. Current empirical and experiential research in the curriculum is able to explain the effects of this type or that type of curriculum, and is able to describe procedures on how to produce types of curriculum materials. However, empirically and experientially based curriculum research and development is unable to provide insights into the meaning and significance of the courses of study that are

implemented in the schools. For this work in the theory or philosophy of curriculum is necessary. This paper is an attempt to continue and extend the work of Dewey, Bobbitt, Phenix and others. In the same tradition, this paper attempts a philosophical and logical understanding of subject matter.

Figure 1

CENTRAL VALUES OF SUBJECT MATTER TYPES

	Major Subject-Matter Types	Subject-Matter Values and Meaning
I	Life Skills and Experiential Studies	Practicality, Utility, Function
	Romantic-Humanistic Studies	Involvement, Creativity, Expression
	Structuralist Studies	Structure, Lawfulness, System, Order, Abstraction
II	Subject-Matter Sub-Types	Values & Meanings of Subject Matter Sub-Types
	Self-Concept Development	Authenticity, Integrity
	Social Reconstruction Studies	Citizenship Participation
	Esthetic Appretiation Studies	Beauty
	Cultural Values Studies	Civilization
	Creative Thinking Studies	Wonder, Curiosity, Imagination
	Poetic & Literary Studies	Poetic, Literary, Metaphorical
	Personality Functioning Studies	Psychological Health
	Social Functioning Studies	Role Performance, Responsibility
	Economic Practice Studies	Utility, Economic Functioning
	Environment or Ecological Studies	Ecological Practice
	Applied Knowledge Studies	Useful Knowledge
	Semantic & Linguistic Studies	Language Practice
	Health Control & Regulation Studies	Physiological Health
	Legal Conformity & System Studies	Lawfulness
	Technological Operations Studies	Mechanical
	Industrial Technology & Civil Engineering	Engineering
	Logical & Mathematical Operations Studies	Reason, Logic
	Grammar	Structured and Patterned Language

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